

## Claims

- [c1] A cut away vest comprising:
- a first torso panel;
  - a second torso panel;
  - shoulder straps connected to the first panel extending to the second torso panel, at least one said shoulder strap having a free end and at least one first connector element;
  - a waist belt having at least one side portion with a free end connecting a lower portion of one of the first torso panel and second torso panel to the other of the first torso panel and second torso panel, said belt side portion having at least one second connector element;
  - at least one connector device connected to the second torso panel and selectively operably associated with a respective at least one of the first and second connector elements; and
  - a flexible retainer element carried by at least one of the first and second torso panels to releasably retain the first and second connector elements associated each with a respective connector device whereby a portion of the retainer element is movable in a generally straight line from the connector device to a curved body portion of a

vest wearer to release the first and second connector elements from their respective connector device.

[c2] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 1 including a cummerbund associated with at least one of the first and second torso panels and having at least one side portion with a first free end overlying a portion of the second torso panel adjacent at least one said connector device, said cummerbund having at least one third connector element associated with a respective said cummerbund side portion with a free end and selectively operably associated with at least one said connector device and releasably retained to the second torso panel by the flexible retainer element.

[c3] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 2 wherein the first, second and third connector elements including holes through a portion of said at least one shoulder strap at least one waist belt side portion and at least one said cummerbund side portion respectively.

[c4] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 3 wherein each said shoulder strap has a free end and at least one first connector element, said waist belt having at least two side portions with free ends with each waist belt side portion having at least one second connector element and said cummerbund having at least two side portions with free

ends with each cummerbund side portion having at least one third connector element, said at least one connector device being one connector device operably associated with at least one of said first connector elements in each of the shoulder straps, at least one said second connector element in each of said waist belt side portions and at least one said third connector element in each of the cummerbund side portions.

[c5] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 5 wherein the first, second and third connector elements include holes and said connector device includes a flexible loop attached to the second torso panel selectively extendable through holes of the first, second and third connector elements.

[c6] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 5 wherein each of the shoulder straps, waist belt side portions and cummerbund side portions having a plurality of first, second and third connector elements respectively in spaced apart relation to provide adjustability of length of the shoulder straps, waist belt, and cummerbund.

[c7] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 7 wherein there is a single flexible loop extendible through holes comprising the first, second and third connector elements in the shoulder straps, waist belt and cummerbund respectively.

[c8] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 5 wherein the flexible retainer element including a flexible cable extending from the connector device to the first torso panel, said flexible retainer element also including a handle portion adjacent an end of the cable and carried by the first torso panel.

[c9] A cut away vest comprising:  
a front torso panel;  
a rear torso panel;  
shoulder straps connected to the front torso panel extending therefrom to the rear torso panel, at least one said shoulder strap having a free end and at least one first connector element;  
a waist belt having at least one side portion with a free end, said waist belt connecting a lower portion of one of the front torso panel and rear torso panel to the other of the first torso panel and rear torso panel, said at least one belt side portion having at least one second connector element;  
at least one connector device connected to the rear torso panel and selectively operably associated with a respective at least one of the first and second connector elements; and  
a flexible retainer element at least partially carried by the rear torso panel to releasably retain the first and second

connector elements associated each with a respective connector device whereby a portion of the retainer element is movable in a generally straight line from the connector device to a curved body portion of a vest wearer to release the first and second connector elements from their respective connector device.

[c10] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 9 including a cummerbund associated with the rear torso panel and having at least two side portions with first ends positionable at the front of a vest wearer and having at least one of the cummerbund side portions with a second free end overlying a portion of the second torso panel adjacent at least one said connector device, said cummerbund having a third connector element selectively operably associated with said at least one connector device and releasably retained to the second torso panel by the flexible retainer element.

[c11] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 10 wherein the first, second and third connector elements including holes through a portion of said at least one shoulder strap, said at least one waist belt side portion and said at least one cummerbund side portion respectively.

[c12] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 11 wherein each said shoulder strap having a free end and at least one

first connector element, said waist belt having at least two side portions each with a free end with each waist belt side portion having at least one second connector element and said cummerbund having at least two side portions each with a free end and at least one third connector element in each cummerbund side portion, said at least one connector device being one connector device operably associated with at least one said first connector element in each of the shoulder straps, at least one said second connector element in each of said waist belt side portions and at least one said third connector elements in each of the cummerbund side portions.

[c13] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 12 wherein the first, second and third connector elements including holes and said connector device including a flexible loop attached to the second torso panel selectively extendable through holes of the first, second and third connector elements.

[c14] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 13 wherein each of the shoulder straps, waist belt side portions and cummerbund side portions having a plurality of first, second and third connector elements respectively in spaced apart relation to provide adjustability of length of the shoulder straps, waist belt, and cummerbund.

[c15] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 13 wherein there is

a single flexible loop extendible through holes comprising the first, second and third connector elements in the shoulder straps, waist belt and cummerbund respectively.

[c16] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 13 wherein the flexible retainer element including a flexible cable extending from the connector device to the front torso panel and passable over the shoulder of a vest wearer, said flexible retainer element also including a handle portion adjacent an end of the cable and carried by the front torso panel.

[c17] A cut away vest comprising:  
a front torso panel;  
a rear torso panel;  
shoulder straps connected to the front torso panel extending therefrom to the rear torso panel, each said shoulder strap having a free end and at least one first connector element;  
a waist belt having at least two side portions each with a free end and connecting a lower portion of the front torso panel to the rear torso panel, said belt side portions each having at least one second connector element;  
a cummerbund associated with the rear torso panel and having at least two side portions each with first and second ends, said cummerbund side portions each having a third connector element;

a multi-orientation connector device connected to the rear torso panel and selectively operably associated with the first, second and third connector elements; and a flexible retainer element at least partially carried by the rear torso panel and having one cable portion operable to releasably retain the first, second and third connector elements engaged each with the connector device whereby a portion of the cable portion extending from the connector device to a curved body portion of a vest wearer moves in a generally straight line to release the first, second and third connector elements from the connector device.

[c18] A cut away vest as set forth in claim 17 wherein the vest includes a plurality of rows of loops in vertically and horizontally spaced relationship and including a separate pouch with at least one mounting strap extending from adjacent a top portion of the pouch and having a plurality of loops on the back side of the pouch spaced vertically to fit between horizontal rows of the loops on the vest, said pouch strap alternately extending through the pouch and vest loops thereby removably securing the pouch to the vest.

[c19] A vest comprising:  
a front torso panel;  
a rear torso panel;



shoulder straps connected to the front torso panel extending to the rear torso panel connecting the front and rear torso panels;

a waist belt extending between the front and rear torso panels and having a first connector device operable to selectively retain two free ends of the waist belt in selective engagement with one another to secure the front and rear torso panels to a wearer adjacent a lower portion of the vest;

a plurality of rows of first loops in vertically and horizontally spaced relationship on at least one of the front and rear torso panels and waist belt; and

a pouch having at least one mounting strap extending from adjacent a top portion of the pouch, said pouch also having a plurality of second loops on at least one side of the pouch; said pouch loops being spaced vertically to fit generally between horizontal rows of first loops, said pouch strap alternatively extending through second loops and first loops thereby removably securing the pouch to the vest.